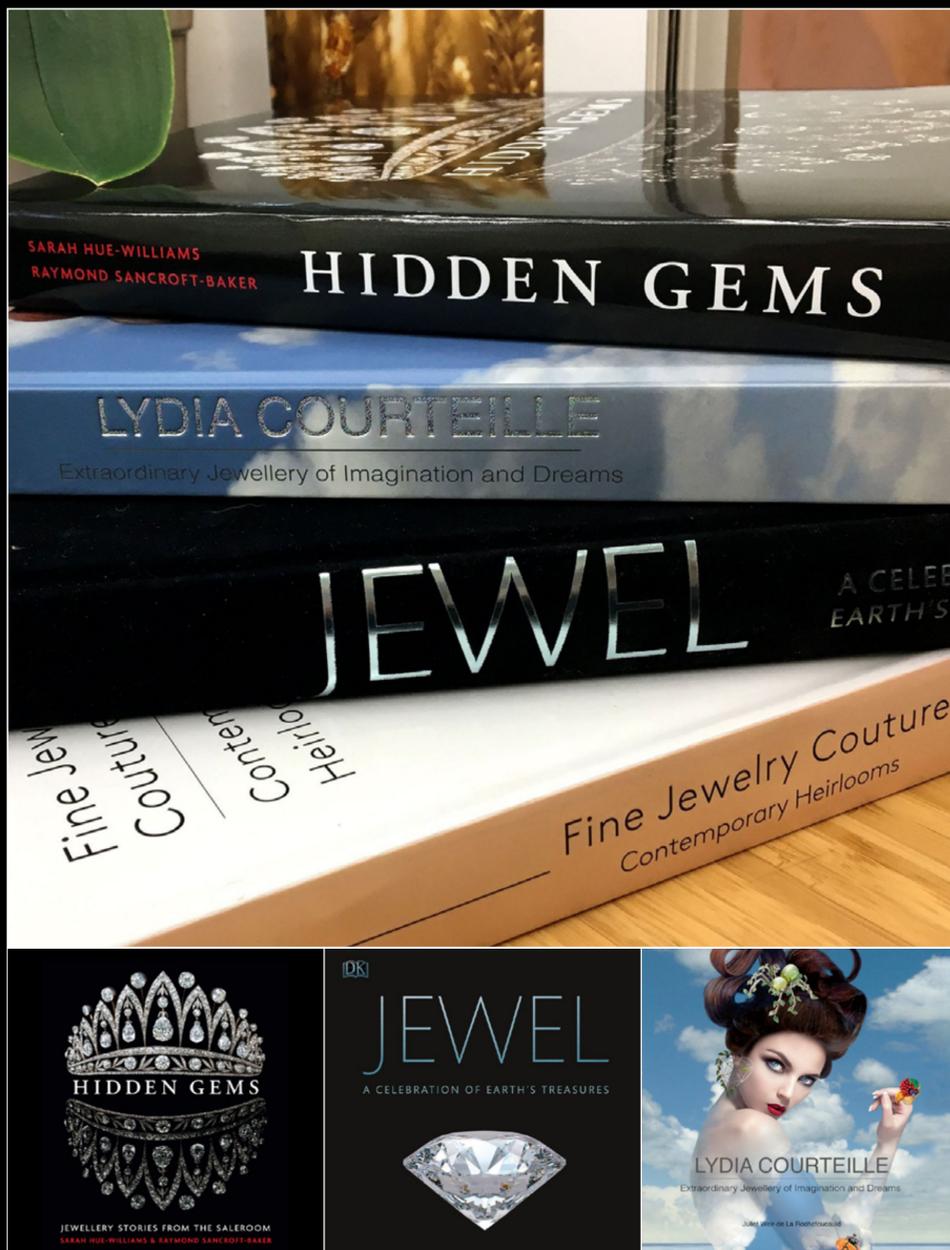




## Gem of a read: the best new books for jewellery lovers

A glut of Christmas list-worthy coffee table books devoted to jewellery and gems has launched this season, and we've reviewed the best of the bunch.

18 October 2016 | by Claire Roberts



A selection of the best coffee-table books devoted to gems or the designers who transform them into jewels launching this season. Hidden Gems is a spellbinding read that captures perfectly how a colourful history and a famous owner or two instantly makes a jewel more desirable.

What a month it's been for reading about jewellery. Perhaps it's because Christmas is on the horizon and there is no greater gift than a large and luxurious coffee-table book devoted to gems – or the designers who transform them into jewels. Whatever the reason, there has been a glut of words written on the subject this season, from Dorling Kindersley's beautifully presented *Jewel: A Celebration of Earth's Treasures*, to a fascinating glimpse into the passionate and provocative mind of one of my favourite jewellers in *Lydia Courteille: Extraordinary Jewellery of Imagination and Dreams*.

If your passion for jewellery lies in the past, you will love Sarah Hue-Williams and Raymond Sancroft-Baker's new book, **Hidden Gems – Jewellery Stories from the Saleroom**. When we cover auctions on *The Jewellery Editor*, it is always those jewels with a story to tell that are the most intriguing, and it is this fascination with provenance, not monetary value, that is at the heart of this book.

Sarah Hue-Williams is a freelance gemologist and jewellery historian, while Raymond Sancroft-Baker was European Jewellery Director for the auction house Christie's for over 20 years. Their combined knowledge has created a spellbinding read that captures perfectly how a colourful history or a famous owner instantly make a jewel more desirable, be it a priceless pink Golconda diamond won by a Mughal Emperor in battle or a pearl and ruby necklace that once graced the neck of Marie Antoinette.

The eclectic selection of jewels and gems whose tales are told over 300 pages are not necessarily the most expensive. "The stories we tell here are based on our first-hand encounters with jewellery in the salerooms at Christie's, and they reveal something of the resonance and personal meaning that jewels have had for their many different owners and wearers through the ages," the authors explain in their introduction. "Together, they tell of the secret journeys of gems and jewels: where they have come from, where they have gone, and what they have seen along the way." Combine these enthralling stories with advice on what to look for in a jewel and how to date them, in case you happen to have some potential heirlooms rattling around in the loft, and you have a book that should be top of the Christmas list for every antique jewellery enthusiast.

Published by Unicorn Press (£35). Buy me

